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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the ways in which anthropology, as a discipline, currently reflects ongoing scholarship on gender, race, ethnicity, social class, and sexual orientation. It argues that feminist anthropology since the 1970s has become an important subdiscipline, primarily within cultural anthropology, but also with a growing impact on biological (physical) anthropology. The essay goes on to explain that most anthropology departments offer courses on sex roles, gender, or women, and that an increasing number of Ph.D. dissertations are being written on topics within feminist anthropology. It notes that anthropology as a field "rediscovered" women in the 1970s, and that increasingly attention is being given to gender, reproduction and sexuality, colonialism and the state in post-colonial societies, political economy and gender, masculinity, and reexamination of the ways about which women are written. (Contains 42 references.) (MDM)

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ANTHROPOLOGY

Discipline Analysis

Louise Lamphere

University of New Mexico

WOMEN in the CURRICULUM

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Women ⁱⁿ the Curriculum

ANTHROPOLOGY

Discipline Analysis

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**National Center for
Curriculum Transformation
Resources on Women
1997**

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PREFACE

Since the 1970s feminist and multicultural scholarship has been challenging the traditional content, organization, methodologies, and epistemologies of the academic disciplines. By now this scholarship is formidable in both quantity and quality and in its engagement of complex issues. The National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women is therefore publishing a series of essays that provide brief, succinct overviews of the new scholarship. Outstanding scholars in the disciplines generously agreed to write the essays, which are intended to help faculty who want to revise courses in light of the new information and perspectives. Each essay is accompanied by a bibliography that includes references for further reading, resources for the classroom, and electronic resources.

Elaine Hedges

Series Editor

Anthropology

Nineteen ninety five marked the twentieth anniversary of the revival of feminist anthropology , which began with the publication of two collections, *Woman, Culture and Society*, edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (1974) and *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna Reiter (Rapp) (1975). In those twenty years, feminist anthropology has become an important sub-discipline, primarily within cultural anthropology, but also with a growing impact on biological (physical) anthropology and archaeology. Anthropologists have also joined linguists in a burgeoning field of language and gender. On the positive side, the Association for Feminist Anthropology had a membership in mid-1996 of 759, making it the eighth largest section out of 30 sections in the American Anthropological Association. As a result of the Gender and Anthropology project, a teaching guide summarizing sources on gender in the four subfields of anthropology (cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, archaeology, and linguistic anthropology) was published (Morgen 1989). Also, the project's work with authors produced new editions of introductory textbooks that included more attention to gender roles and material on women interspersed throughout a text rather than ghettoized in a chapter on "family" or "culture and personality." Most departments offer undergraduate courses on sex roles, gender and/or women, and an increasing number of Ph.D. dissertations are being written on topics within feminist anthropology.

Several of the highest ranked graduate departments (Michigan, Berkeley, Harvard, Arizona, Stanford, UCLA) have two or more faculty who specialize in gender. On the negative side, articles on women or gender are still a minority in the discipline's major journals. Anthropological theory is still dominated by the great male figures, and it has been difficult to insert feminist contributions into courses on the history of theory or contemporary theory. Finally, in a declining job market, feminist anthropologists are finding it difficult to obtain full-time academic jobs.

Even as the number of feminist anthropologists has been increasing, the field itself has been transformed. The revival of feminist anthropology in the 1970s involved a focus on women's roles cross-culturally, the formulation of a broad comparative framework, and the search for an overarching theory of women's seemingly universal subordination. This amounted to a "rediscovering women" phase, characteristic of other disciplines in this period, including history, sociology, and literature. In recent years our attention has turned to an analysis of gender that includes historically situated theories about men and women. At the same time, feminist anthropologists have forged new ethnographic strategies in writing about women's lives. Feminist anthropologists are more clear about the positionality of the anthropologist as researcher and ethnographer. Taking to heart many of the criticisms by women of color, lesbians, and Third World peoples as well as the insights of postmodern theorists concerning the nature of objectivity, science, and truth, feminist anthropologists are less apt to make broad generalizations and are more careful to engage in research that is in dialogue with the women they study. Feminist anthropologists are also a more diverse group, including more lesbians, women of color, Third World women, and men interested in the study of gender and masculinity.

Rediscovering Women

Anthropology has long been a discipline which has been seen as a "welcoming science," one where women like Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict had an important place. In fact, between 1920 and 1940, more than half of the Ph.Ds awarded by Columbia University's Anthropology Department, founded by Franz Boas, the "father" of American anthropology, were women. Some women anthropologists, particularly Elsie Clews Parsons, considered themselves to be feminists. However, the work of Parsons, Gladys Reichard, Ruth Underhill, and Ruth Bunzel on women largely disappeared from the canon, and as studies of culture and personality waned, the work of Benedict and Mead became relegated to an historical footnote. By the 1960s there were a substantial number of books and monographs (by authors like Phyllis Kaberry, Ruth Landes, Bunzel, Underhill, Sylvia Leith-Ross, and Denis Paulme) that focused on women's lives. But it was not until the early 1970s, with the impact of the feminist movement and anti-Vietnam war politics on the increasing numbers of women entering anthropology, that feminist anthropology re-emerged as an intellectual tradition within anthropology.

The essays in *Woman, Culture and Society* were based on a course at Stanford University in the spring of 1971, papers delivered at the 1971 AAA meetings, and research being done by a network of friends and colleagues of Shelly Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. The collection *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Reiter, grew out of her participation in a student-organized course and included a number of graduate students and faculty connected to the University of Michigan. Both volumes reflect the training of women anthropologists in departments with differing theoretical orientations (social structuralists at Harvard, symbolic anthropologists at Chicago,

and materialists at Michigan) and the impact of the feminist movement of the 1970s.

In writing the introduction and first chapter to *Woman Culture and Society* Rosaldo and Lamphere were faced with building a framework where none existed. They gravitated towards the work of Margaret Mead and Simone de Beauvoir and found in both an analysis of pervasive sexual asymmetry which fit their own reading of the ethnographic literature. The introductory essays by Rosaldo, Sherry Ortner, and Nancy Chodorow offered an integrated set of explanations for this universal subordination, each at a different level, that is, in terms of social structure, culture, and socialization. All three argued that in every society women bear and raise children and that women's socially and culturally defined role as mother provided the basis for subordination. Rosaldo located subordination in women's confinement to a domestic as opposed to a public sphere, while Ortner argued that men were associated with culture and women, seen as being closer to nature, were devalued.

Soon after the publication of *Woman, Culture and Society*, a number of feminist anthropologists began to challenge the thesis of women's universal subordination and the usefulness of dichotomies like public/private and nature/culture. Some argued that men and women in many foraging and tribal societies held roles that were "complementary but equal" (Schlegel 1977, Briggs 1970), or that men and women had the same relationship to the productive means and resources and therefore equal power (Sacks 1979). Others suggested that the dichotomies domestic/public or nature/culture did not fit the realities of all cultures (Nelson, Sudarkasa, MacCormack, and Strathern 1980). Finally, some feminists pointed to the role of colonialism in transforming gender roles and creating the inequalities seen in historical accounts (Leacock 1981).

The Turn to History and Gender

Beginning in the early 1980s, a number of feminists, following the legacy left by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo (1980) were urging anthropologists to turn their attention to the relations between men and women and to analyze gender as it was socially constructed through hierarchy (Ortner and Whitehead 1981, Collier and Yanagisako 1987). At the same time, partly owing to the influence of Marxist approaches and historians like E.P. Thompson, more attention was given to historical analysis, not just as a preliminary chapter in a contemporary ethnography, but as a central part of understanding how women's lives had developed. These trends have blossomed into further developments, all of which signal a feminist anthropology that is grounded in historically located, context specific research where the positionality of the researcher and the voices of her/his subjects come to the foreground. We can see this in the outpouring of research into the lives of early women anthropologists, the attention given to writing feminist ethnography, the range of publications surrounding the topics of reproduction and sexuality, and the new research on political economy and class as well as on the colonial encounter.

Rediscovering Our Roots

Spurred on by the biography of Margaret Mead by her daughter, Mary Catherine Bateson (1984) and by Peter Hare's book about his great aunt Elsie Clews Parsons (1985), feminist anthropologists have reexamined the lives and works of a wide range of early women anthropologists. We have become much more aware both of the posi-

tionality of these women and the historical context in which they wrote. The Wenner-Gren Conference on "Daughters of the Desert" resulted in a reappraisal of women anthropologists who studied the Native American Southwest, including Parsons, Benedict, Bunzel, Underhill and a number of women archaeologists, ethnologists, applied anthropologists, and museum specialists (Babcock and Parezo 1988, Parezo 1993). The contributions of Alice Fletcher, Matilda Cox Stevenson, and other nineteenth-century "pioneers" have been documented, and two biographies of Elsie Clews Parsons have appeared (Zumwalt 1992, Deacon 1996). More recent female ethnographers like Ruth Landes and Barbara Myerhoff have received attention (Cole and Frank in Gordon and Behar 1995). More importantly, the work of African American women like Zora Neale Hurston, Caroline Bond Day, Katherine Dunham, Ellen Irene Diggs, and Vera Green has been made visible, as well as that of Ella Cara Deloria and Morning Dove, two Native American writers (Gacs, et al. 1988, Fink and Hernandez in Gordon and Behar 1995). We have learned not only more about the lives of women anthropologists but have begun to read their research in new and different ways, not only for what these women had to say about gender, but also for the ways in which race, class, and historical location informed their perspectives (Visweswaren 1997).

Re-Examining Our Writing

As part of the trend within socio-cultural anthropology to examine the nature of anthropological field research and the politics of representation, feminist anthropologists have placed more emphasis on examining the dilemmas of our relationship to those we study and on formulating new

writing strategies. These have included Lila Abu-Lughod's plea for a feminist anthropology that disrupts boundaries and replaces the presumption of a universal "female experience" with a grounded sense of both commonalities and differences (1990: 27) as well as the experimental use of play writing, short stories and diaries to examine cultural difference (Gordon and Behar 1995). Recent ethnographies, such as Lila Abu-Lughod's *Writing Women's Worlds* (1993), and life histories like Ruth Behar's *Translated Woman* (1993) have placed the feminist anthropologist within the text and have more clearly explicated her relationship to her subjects.

Reproduction and Sexuality

Much recent research has focused on women's bodies in the areas of reproduction and sexuality. As currently conceived this burgeoning literature has contributed to the broad discussions within anthropology about the interface between technology, culture, and the body; the construction of personhood and the self; and strategies of resistance to hegemonic cultural forms, including those having to do with sexuality and gender (Ginsburg and Rapp 1994). Research on the new reproductive technologies (amniocentesis, surrogate motherhood, in vitro fertilization, new forms of birth control) demonstrates the connection between reproduction and gender ideologies (Martin, Delany), as well as the conceptions and strategies women utilize in dealing with these new interventions (Ragone, Rapp, Franklin). Ginsburg's and Rapp's collection (1994) takes a global perspective and looks at the role of the state and new reproductive technologies in countries as disparate as the United States, India, China, Romania, Egypt, and Brazil. The editors argue that "women actively use their cultural

logics and social relations to incorporate, revise or resist the influence of seemingly distant economic and social forces.”

In the area of sexuality, Kath Weston’s review of Lesbian/Gay studies published in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* in 1993 documented the richness of the new literature and placed gay and lesbian studies solidly within socio-cultural anthropology. Two recent collections—*Out in the Field* (edited by Ellen Lewin, and Bill Leap 1996) and *Two Spirit People* (edited by Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang)—indicate the importance of a gender framework in studies of sexuality. Likewise, the recent attention given to heterosexuality, as exemplified in Ann Stoler’s book *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995) demonstrates the intimate connections between race, gender, and colonialism.

Including Masculinity

A number of scholars (mostly male anthropologists) have begun to examine “men” not as an unmarked category but as a historically and culturally constructed category. This has resulted in studies of masculinity in Europe (Herzfield 1985, Brandes 1987, Gilmore 1991) and New Guinea. In addition, notions of machismo in Nicaragua (Lancaster 1992), Mexico (Gutmann 1995), and Southwest Texas (Limon 1989) have been interrogated, not only to define a very different sex/gender system than that found in the Anglo United States, but also to examine the way masculinity is being transformed by new economic and social forces (the increase in working wives, declining economic circumstances, etc.).

Mapping Colonialism and the State in Post-Colonial Societies

The effect of taking a more historically situated approach is best seen in the new literature on gender in colonial and post-colonial societies. Drawing on the writings of colonial administrators, merchants and missionaries, Ann Stoler (1995) and Jean and John Comaroff (1991,1992) have given us a sense of the complexity of the European communities that colonized Southeast Asia and Africa (divided as they were by class and gender) and of the varied responses of gendered colonial subjects.

Several authors have refined the view of the state as circumscribing women's activities under colonialism. While Gailey (1987) argues that missionary activity and the penetration of capitalism in nineteenth-century Tonga did bring about women's subordination, her detailed analysis of one case shows the complexity of the relationship between pre-colonial social formations and the structures that eventually emerge. Silverblatt (1988) cautions that state formation did not lead to the subordination of women in equivalent ways and argues that in Peru Andean women resisted their definition as witches and became defenders of pre-Colombian ways of living.

These new studies demonstrate that colonialism was not the steam roller of history; rather women and men resisted the imposition of colonial regimes, constructed a pastiche of old and new cultural forms, and preserved their cultural heritage within changing contexts.

Political Economy and Gender

Finally, many feminist anthropologists have continued along the path set by those who have stressed the importance of globalization. These scholars have emphasized a political economy perspective that integrates cultural meanings with a dissection of political issues and material realities (di Leonardo 1991). For these theorists, as for many already mentioned, gender is intimately bound up with inequalities, not only in the often dominant relation of men to women, but also those of class and race. While some of these studies focus on the workplace (Zavella 1987, Sacks 1979, and Lamphere, et al. 1993), others tease out the role of the state in shaping class, race and gender relations (Morgen 1990). Sacks in her most recent book examines the interconnections between race, class, and gender in the context of looking at the Jewish experience in the United States (Sacks 1997).

By the early 1990s feminist anthropology, unlike the feminism of the teens and twenties, was well-incorporated into the curriculum of traditional anthropology departments and continues to have an impact on women's studies programs. Feminists argue that they have created new theoretical frameworks by incorporating gender and making the epistemological assertion that women have something innovative to say about society, whether it be about state formation, the role of power and resistance in the workplace, the cultural construction of reproduction, or the crafting of identities. Most feminists feel that the outpouring of feminist research and theory will continue to bring feminists to the center of anthropology and re-claim the feminist heritage that began with Elsie Clews Parsons.

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Electronic Resources:

COSWA-L: Women in Anthropology list. Coswa-l@relay.doit.wisc.edu. To subscribe send message "join coswa-l <your name>" to listserver@relay.doit.wisc.edu (note it is listserver not listserv).

ANTHRO-L: General Anthropology list, covering the four fields. listserv@ubvm.cc.buffalo.edu

ANAHITA: Women and gender in the ancient world. Send message "sub Anahita <your name>: listserv@lsv.uky.edu

FEMINISA@csf.colorado.edu: Feminisa is conceived as a list where those who work on or think about feminism, gender, women and international relations, world politics, international political economy, or global politics can communicate.

ASSOCIATION FOR FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY: will soon have a home page

WEDA (<http://wings.buffalo.edu/go?weda>): WEDA is a free, online email and mail directory. It is a searchable directory which lists an ever-growing number of anthropologists and scholars in related fields, from industry, government, academic, research, and museum institutions around the world.

About the Author

Louise Lamphere is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of New Mexico. Her research interests include women's work and gender, urban anthropology, ethnicity and immigration, and Native North America. Her field research has been carried out in New England and the Southwest. Her publications include *Women, Culture and Society*, co-edited with Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo (1974); *Structuring Diversity* (1992), *Sunbelt Working Mothers*, with Patricia Zavella, Felipe Gonzalez, and Peter B. Evans (1993); and *Situated Lives: Gender and Culture in Everyday Life*, edited with Helena Ragone and Patricia Zavella (1997).

Reader Comment

Discipline Analysis Essay: Anthropology

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|---|---|
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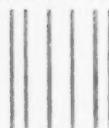
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Publications of the National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women

WOMEN IN THE CURRICULUM

The following publications consist of directories, manuals, and essays covering the primary information needed by educators to transform the curriculum to incorporate the scholarship on women. The publications have been designed to be brief, user friendly, and cross referenced to each other. They can be purchased as a set or as individual titles. Tables of contents and sample passages are available on the National Center Web page: <http://www.towson.edu/ncctrw/>.

➤ ***Directory of Curriculum Transformation Projects and Activities
in the U.S.***

The *Directory* provides brief descriptions of 237 curriculum transformation projects or activities from 1973 to the present. It is intended to help educators review the amount and kinds of work that have been occurring in curriculum transformation on women and encourage them to consult project publications (see also *Catalog of Resources*) and to contact project directors for more information about projects of particular interest and relevance to their needs.

386 pages, 8½ x 11 hardcover, \$30 individuals, \$45 institutions, ISBN 1-885303-07-6

➤ ***Catalog of Curriculum Transformation Resources***

The *Catalog* lists materials developed by curriculum transformation projects and national organizations that are available either free or for sale. These include proposals, reports, bibliographies, workshop descriptions, reading lists, revised syllabi, classroom materials, participant essays, newsletters, and other products of curriculum transformation activities, especially from those projects listed in the *Directory*. These resources provide valuable information, models, and examples for educators leading and participating in curriculum transformation activities.

(Available fall 1997)

➤ ***Introductory Bibliography for Curriculum Transformation***

The *Introductory Bibliography* provides a list of references for beginning curriculum transformation on women, especially for those organizing projects and activities for faculty and teachers. It does not attempt to be comprehensive but rather to simplify the process of selection by offering an "introduction" that will lead you to other sources.

15 pages, 6 x 9 paper, \$7, ISBN 1-885303-32-7

➤ ***Getting Started: Planning Curriculum Transformation***

Planning Curriculum Transformation describes the major stages and components of curriculum transformation projects as they have developed since about 1980. Written by Elaine Hedges, whose long experience in women's studies and curriculum transformation projects informs this synthesis, *Getting Started* is designed to help faculty and administrators initiate, plan, and conduct faculty development and curriculum projects whose purpose is to incorporate the content and perspectives of women's studies and race/ethnic studies scholarship into their courses.

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